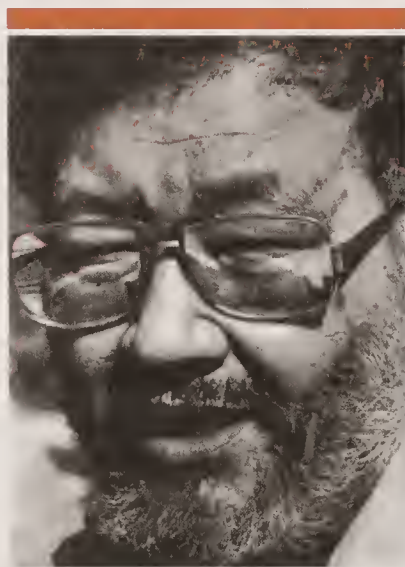


THE CONFIRMATION OF THE EARTH

WRITER N. SCOTT MOMADAY ON THE POWER OF PLACE

In a distinguished career spanning some thirty years, writer N. Scott Momaday has often celebrated the landscapes of the American West, linking humans' spiritual quests with their physical locations, their "sense of place." What is a sense of place and what does it mean in a person's life? These are some of the questions Momaday explored when he spoke recently with Executive Director Jim Quay in preparation for the Council's community project in San Diego, where Momaday will deliver the 1993 Public Humanities Lecture on June 4.



N. Scott Momaday

One is born with a need to understand oneself in relation to points in space.

Quay: You once told Charles Woodard that you didn't think anyone could write without "a sense of place." What contributes to a sense of place and why is it particularly important for a writer?

Momaday: I think a sense of place is necessary not only to writers but to everyone. It's necessary to understand where you are in relation to the things around you. Certainly this is true of a writer. Explaining where he is or dealing with his perception of his relationship to the world becomes, in a way, a writer's subject.

Quay: In that same interview you said that a sense of place might be even more important to you than to other writers in general. So there's something particular to you about a sense of place. Where does that come from?

Momaday: My sense of place probably grows more or less directly out of my Indian heritage. In the Indian world the sense of place—one's relationship to the physical world—is extremely important. I once gave a ride to a Navajo hitchhiker, and as we were driving through the Navajo reservation, I started asking him about place names. To my astonishment he could name almost every rock along the way. Everything had a name. I came away from that conversation with a real understanding of how important place was to him. I think that's generally true of Indian people.

Quay: Wallace Stegner describes writers like Thoreau, Frost, Faulkner, and Wendell Berry as "lovers of known earth, known weathers, and known neighbors both human and non-human." I'm sure Stegner would place you in that company as well. Are there other writers in that tradition who have been important to you?

Momaday: Yes, certainly. A book that has meant a lot to me from the time I discovered it is *Out of Africa*. Isak Dinesen is so keenly focused upon the African landscape in that book that it becomes her subject—and she deals with it in such a wonderful way. There are other writers, too, the ones they call "regionalists" because they write about a particular landscape, a particular part of the country. I certainly think of myself in that tradition. I celebrate the landscape of the American West in my work. I write about places where I have been, where I have fashioned some idea of the landscape.

Quay: I know that you love to travel and that you have lived in many, many different places—Oklahoma, New Mexico, the San Francisco Bay Area, the Soviet Union, as well as Arizona, where you are now. How have you gone about finding a sense of place?

Momaday: I think one is born with a sense of place, or a need to understand oneself in relation to points in space, so I

think it comes very naturally to me. I was born in the Great Plains, a fantastic landscape, and was fortunate enough to grow up in wonderfully beautiful landscapes—the canyon country of New Mexico, where I spent most of my boyhood. When I have traveled, I have always had an eye for the lay of the land, the confirmation of the earth. And in the places where I have been, I have always been keenly aware of the natural settings, and have responded to them in an interesting way, a kind of spiritual way.

Quay: Could you say more about that? We do often speak of the "spirit" of a place.

Momaday: I certainly think—and this again probably stems from my Native American heritage—that the earth itself is possessed of spirits and that every place has its own spiritual identity. Places differ greatly one from another; it's very valuable and gratifying to understand what you can about the spiritual identity of a place. The Indian world is full of sacred places. I love to visit those places. They rejuvenate my own spirit, and give it profound meaning.

Quay: Is there something those places hold in common? Are there special kinds of landscapes that you seek out?

Momaday: I think that because I was born in the southern Great Plains and grew up in northern New Mexico, I can identify more easily with those landscapes than with the landscapes I meet as a traveler in a new place for a short time. A sense of place really requires a kind of seeding, a slow growth.

Quay: What are the greatest obstacles to really feeling that sense?

Momaday: We don't pay enough attention to our relationship to the natural world. We are caught up in communities that have concrete wrappings. Stars are difficult to see because of light pollution. Silence is almost impossible to find in our daily life. But when I go out to look at Tsoai for example, on the Navajo reservation, I see the stars and hear the silence, which is very deeply affecting. That is to be alive in a different and deeper way than most of us give ourselves time for these days.

A MAN MADE OF WORDS

I have been called "the man made of words," a phrase that I myself coined some years ago in connection with a Kiowa folktale. It is an identity that pleases me. In a sense, a real sense, my life has been composed of words. Reading and writing, talking, telling stories, listening, remembering, and thinking (someone has said that thinking is talking to oneself). Words inform the element in which I live my daily life.

N. Scott Momaday

From the preface, *In the Presence of the Sun: Stories and Poems*, 1961-1991 (St. Martin's Press, 1992).

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The California Council for the Humanities is a state-based affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Humanities Network is published quarterly and mailed to anyone who requests it from the San Francisco office.

CONFIRMATION OF THE EARTH *Continued*

Quay: I want to return to this notion that it takes time to develop a sense of place. You've pointed out that in the mid-17th century, the Kiowa moved from the area around the headwaters of the Yellowstone to the Great Plains. How long do you think it took for the Kiowa as a people to feel at home on the Great Plains?

Momaday: It must have taken a long time. It was a profound adjustment, a revolution in the true sense of that word. To be a mountain people and then become a plains people required a tremendous adaptation, and, perhaps, a tremendous act of the imagination. I was speaking in Colorado a year or so ago, and during the question period, someone asked, "How long does it take for a people to become indigenous?" I had to pause. I thought of saying, "Fifteen hundred-and-forty eight years, three months, and eighteen days," or something like that. The point is that the Native American has been in North America for nearly thirty thousand years. That means something. That indicates a knowledge of the landscape and of the continent that has determined the identity and the world view of a whole people.

Momaday: I think there are different senses of place. The city dweller, the person who resides in Chicago or Los Angeles, sees a different face of the world. He is among manmade objects, surrounded by architecture, in a place where the natural light of the sky is often obliterated by artificial light. I'm not saying that this is necessarily bad, but it is different from the sense of one who is able to see a sunset or a starry sky. And I am suggesting that one sense of place does seem to be more clearly related to the spiritual than the other. We could talk about cathedrals, places like Chartres, I suppose, but in American society of the last decade of the twentieth century, people who live in cities are enveloped, are distanced from the natural world of wilderness and rivers and mountains and trees. That seems to me, in a way, too bad. But man is the most adaptable of animals, so he can live in both worlds.

Quay: Speaking of the spiritual, it occurs to me that natural places have a certain kind of sacredness about them. But I'm wondering if people are able to sanctify places just by having lived there for a certain amount of time, or lived there in a certain way.

in Moscow, I wrote about the Southwest of the United States. I think we tend to do this—take a bit of our heritage with us wherever we go. That too is part of adaptation.

Quay: When people move into a new place, they inevitably encounter those who are already there and those who may find their sense of place now disrupted by the newcomers. I remember reading that the Kiowas were befriended by the Crow. I'm thinking now that many of San Diego's neighborhoods have new populations of Salvadorans, Guatemalans, Hmong, Kampuchians who are now encountering more established populations. How could those encounters be made less painful? Or is disruption inevitable?

Momaday: I've thought a lot about the Kiowas coming down out of the mountains and entering upon the Great Plains and encountering the Crows. I think it was extremely fortunate that they didn't annihilate each other. The Crows extended friendship, took the Kiowas in, gave them the Sun Dance religion and taught them how to live on the Plains. That was a fortunate thing in the history of the world, and I suspect that it is more common than mutual annihilation. And so it works now in our cities: new people come in, and people who are established in neighborhoods welcome them, perhaps not readily—but sooner or later they strike a balance and are able to live together on favorable terms. I think that is what mankind does. It is a function of being human.

Quay: One thing we've discovered through the interviews with people living in five neighborhoods of San Diego is that people define the city by referring to other places, places as different as Mississippi, Manhattan, Des Moines, Beverly Hills. What does that reveal?

Momaday: I'm not sure what that reveals, but when I think of San Diego, I think of none of those places. It's a beautiful city. I'd love to spend more time there to get a deeper sense of what the place is. I'm sure that its proximity to Mexico make for an extremely interesting complexity. I would think of some city on the coast having all the

benefits of the ocean, perhaps San Francisco, or Monterey. But I'm sure people there bring their own impressions of landscapes from other places and superimpose them upon the physical world of San Diego, so it becomes what they imagine it to be.

Quay: I'd like to return to the role of the writer and the reader in developing a sense of place. Lipsitz writes that we spend most of our time in private places that isolate us from the experience and insights of other people. He's hoping that the San Diego project will encourage people to see their city through the eyes of others. Isn't that the great gift that storytellers bring us? The opportunity to imagine the world through the eyes of other people?

Momaday: I certainly think so. That is one of the great functions of story. Stories enable us to imagine ourselves in new ways. The storyteller brings us his experience and shares it with us. That's a wonderful thing.

Quay: In your book *The House Made of Dawn* the title itself seems to relate to a sense of place, a sense of being at home where you know where the sun will rise and set, of being placed in the landscape.

Momaday: I think it's critically important for one to have mooring to the earth, to know where one stands in relation to the rising sun, to this constellation or that. We are born, we grow old and we die—but all in relation to points in space. To know where our hearts are at last is important. Once we have that within ourselves, once we know a place where we see the things around us familiarly, we are free to break away. We can go around the world then, because we understand where we are in relation to things. But there is always this idea of gravitating, of returning. You establish a relationship to a place forever. For the whole of your life you return to that place, mentally, spiritually, or physically. A friend of mine made what I think is a brilliant observation about place. She wrote, "when language touches the land, place is created." There is something to that. We tell stories about places and in the process we locate ourselves. It becomes a spiritual journey or a spiritual act of some kind. And we never lose it.

New people come in, and people who are established in the neighborhood welcome them, perhaps not readily—but sooner or later they strike a balance.

Quay: Of course, if the Kiowa were migratory, Americans are almost peripatetic in the way we move around. In *The Way to Rainy Mountain* you wrote "the events of one's life take place," and emphasized the "take place." But so much of modern life seems somehow displaced.

Momaday: Yes, and I think it has to do with a kind of superficiality. When the Kiowas were migrating, even though they were moving constantly from one place to another, it was a slow journey. They had time to observe the things around them, time to touch the soil, time to imagine themselves truly in relation to that tree, that rock, that river. We don't give ourselves that kind of time now. We fly over the earth without giving much thought to the distance we're covering or to what really defines distance. We don't see the things below us; they're almost invisible. We call that progress, and we're very proud of ourselves for being able to cover such distances so quickly, but I think we lose a good deal in the process. We fail to see where we are and where we've been and where we're going.

Quay: George Lipsitz is a professor at UC San Diego who is playing a role in the Council's San Diego project. He writes about how people define their sense of place in an urban setting through art, graffiti, murals, music. The question that raises for me is are there two distinct senses of place? One being the sense of place you feel in a natural setting and the other a sense of place you feel in a built environment? Would developing a sense of place in San Diego require different arts or different skills from developing that sense on the High Plains or in the New Mexico desert?

Momaday: Yes, I'm sure that is true. There are at least two kinds of sacred places. Some sacred places are natural features in the landscape, like Devil's Tower. But others are certainly manmade, and their sacredness is purchased with human sacrifice. Battlefields are in a sense sacred grounds because people have invested their blood in such places. "Sacred" and "sacrifice"—the two words are related etymologically, and that's interesting to me. When we perceive of the sacred, we are in a sense talking about sacrifice.

Quay: Wallace Stegner said that the "sense of place is realized only through an act of submission to place." I've often thought that one antidote for all the cultural divisions we feel is that people from quite different cultures can come to feel at home in the same place. Is that true to your experience?

Momaday: Yes it is. And this gets us back to the notion of adaptation. People are remarkably able to fit themselves into whatever context they find themselves in—and this is another aspect of the sense of place. Stegner is right in talking about an idea of "submission." We give ourselves of necessity to the environment in which we exist, whether we exist there willingly or otherwise. We can make do. That's perhaps our greatest characteristic as a species. This happens all the time. I travel a lot and am able to fit myself into a new place in the world where a different language is spoken, where customs are different and where there is a different look to the architecture and the landscape. I like being able to fit myself into new places. Yet I think we all carry around within us a piece of the earth that belongs especially to us as individuals. When I was



Photo: Stephen Eisler Productions

THE DESERT'S BROKEN SILENCE

The Desert's Broken Silence focuses on an aspect of the controversy surrounding access to the public lands in California's fragile deserts, examining views on both sides of the fight over offroad vehicles. It is one of 33 films included in the Council's Film & Speakers minigrant program. Through this program, the Council awards a small grant to a non-profit organization to rent and screen one of the films, followed by a scholar-led discussion of issues and themes explored in the film. For additional information on the program, contact Stan Yogi at 415/391-1474.

VANISHING LANDSCAPES OF THE GREAT CENTRAL VALLEY

On nine consecutive Thursday evenings earlier this year, "The Other California: Defining the Great Central Valley for the Twenty-first Century," a Council-funded colloquium lecture series held at Modesto Junior College, explored topics ranging from "Water in the Valley and the Art of the Possible" to "Voices from the Heartland."

The lectures consistently drew lively audiences of several hundred, and were later aired over Post-Newsweek Cable Television in Modesto and Sonora Cable Television in the Motherlode. Videotapes of the lectures can be viewed at the Modesto Junior College Library and borrowed from Stanislaus County Library.

The following excerpt is adapted from William Preston's February 11 talk "Vanishing Landscapes: The Natural History of the Great Central Valley." Preston is professor of geography at California Polytechnic State University and the author of *Vanishing Landscapes: Land and Life in the Tulare Lake Basin, California*.

Cultural geographers look for important processes that tend to bring change to a natural setting. Many things can initiate change on a landscape, but human population, technology, and attitudes are among the strongest determinants of such a change. These, of course, are components of human culture. So we include people as part of the natural history of a region.

Humans are very strong agents of environmental change, and have been for thousands of years. But peoples and populations do not affect their environments equally. Some societies, with tremendous amounts of energy and technology, dramatically reshape their surroundings, while other societies, with less energy and technology, have a smaller impact on the landscape.

But other aspects of human culture tend to filter human impact on the environment. For example, we have the capacity to denude the Sierra in a couple of years, but we don't. Why not? There are many reasons, but our environmental attitude is one of the most important.

A society's environmental attitude is both shaped by and expressed through religion, education, laws, government and a host of other aspects of its culture. When, for example, the Chinese adopted Buddhism, they also adopted cremation, and forests began to disappear. Likewise, when the U.S. government wrote water subsidies into the law, it had an impact on the landscape of the San Joaquin Valley.

How these cultural determinants shape a landscape will vary from one place to another, but geographers have two rules of thumb. One rule is that populations and technologies that evolve *in situ*—in place—over a long period of time, coping and adapting to the place, unleash fewer changes. The other rule is that when a system developed elsewhere is superimposed on a new place, there is a rapid acceleration of change in that landscape. In the Great Central Valley, we have examples of the workings of both these rules of thumb.

FIRST PEOPLES

The archeological record suggests that the Valley was first peopled about 10,000 years ago. The first humans to come into the Valley, of course, brought technologies from elsewhere. They seem to have been big-game hunters—they had

sophisticated projectile points and used fire—and they may have played a role in the extinction of the mastodon and the great beaver.

Over thousands of years, these native Californians coped and adapted to their landscape and came up with a highly successful means of securing a living. One measure of that success is the fact that the population density of the San Joaquin and Sacramento valleys was unmatched in North America, even by the agricultural peoples of the Southeast. To find similar densities you have to go to the Valley of Mexico.

These native Californians, among them the Yokuts of the Tulare Lake Basin, were not agricultural people. They were foragers. They lived directly off the environment, an extremely rich environment, and were intimately related to it. There is no need to trivialize them by claiming that they did not change their environment. They did. They hunted animals and probably diminished the natural diversity in some regions of the basin. They used fire on the landscape to increase their productivity in foraging for both herbs and animals, for example. They had a great civilization, which was culled and eliminated before we could understand and learn from it, a civilization that produced waste. So they altered the landscape to sustain their way of life.

Still, they lived more lightly on the land than we do. They lived—no phrase says it better—more harmoniously within their landscape than we do. Why?

The native Californians' cultural outlook helped them immeasurably. They believed themselves to be part of their environment. They believed that spirituality extended from them into the rock and the deer, and that existence was cyclical, without a beginning and an end, so that they would not ascend to heaven for eternity but would return to the nest to be born again. This meant that their spirit was no better than that of the deer, so while they might eat the deer, they would also placate the spirit left behind. This attitude, many believe, kept the native Californians of the Central Valley from overexploiting the environment.

THE SURVEY SYSTEM

The geographer's second rule of thumb is amply illustrated by the arrival of the Americans in the Great Central Valley. The Hispanic presence during both the Spanish and Mexican eras affected the Valley, accelerating the simplification of the environment, but the purpose was to exploit the resources of the Valley, not to settle it. The Americans, with their faith in Manifest Destiny, came to settle.

Beginning with Frémont, who thought the Valley was best suited for a giant pasture, American settlers superimposed a system that increasingly bound the region to international markets and decision-making processes, beginning the dramatic alteration of the landscape that continues up to the present. Nowhere is the process and the cultural outlook that underlies that process more starkly revealed than in the imposition of the Township and Range Survey System.

Most Americans might not like it, but the view of settlement put forth in Michael Landon's "Little House on the Prairie" television series is basically wrong. Ninety percent of the West was surveyed first, before the settlers arrived. Many people, geographers among them, came into the Great Central Valley before early settlement to assess its potential for settlement. When Califor-

Populations and technologies that evolve in a place over a long period of time unleash fewer changes.



This NASA Landsat photograph shows the enduring impact of the Township and Range Survey System on the Tulare Lake Basin. Photo courtesy of William Preston.

nia entered the Union in 1850, it fell under U.S. law, which meant that it had to be surveyed using the prevailing system, the Township and Range Survey System, a system which imposed a grid over the land.

This survey system was developed to extend democracy across the United States, following the Jeffersonian principle that ours should be a nation of small, independent farmers. In some ways the system succeeded in doing that, but in other ways, because certain laws were not enforced, it allowed for a great deal of land speculation. Many farmers in the Valley benefited from the system, especially those on the rich land of the eastern side of the Valley. However, much of this land was bought up by speculators who did not settle the land but instead held large units and waited for prices to rise. The survey made speculation, and the notion that an owner could be unrelated to the land, easier because a buyer didn't have to stake out his own land but could go instead to a land office and simply point to this or that parcel.

The survey system reflects a different attitude toward the landscape than that held by the Yokuts. The Yokuts felt religiously related to the soil, the water,

the trees. What does a system that pays close attention to boundaries laid down by surveyors do?

It fosters ideas that favor uniformity over diversity. In this system, people began to see their part of nature within a box—the 160 acres they came to settle. We all know that processes of land and life—wind, water, the movement of animals—cross boundaries, but the grid made it possible for people to see parts of this process as private property.

As a result, people began to see land as a commodity, to see it quantitatively rather than qualitatively. So if a person didn't get as nice a piece of property as his neighbor had, he could change it into something more uniform. Instead of adapting to the peculiarities of the landscape, as the Yokuts had, with tremendous knowledge, skill, energy and technology, the Americans transformed the landscape itself.

As it did in the time of the Yokuts, the Tulare Lake Basin—and the Great Central Valley itself—still yields abundantly to the pursuits of the Americans. The question remains, however, whether this land will continue to respond favorably within a relationship based on force.

SEARCHING FOR S

April 24 - June 4

Why do some San Diegans feel completely at home, while others feel out of place? What does it mean to be part of a community? How do people from very different backgrounds, with different histories and outlooks, create a shared sense of belonging?

These are some of the questions that will be explored over the next few weeks during the California Council for the Humanities' "Searching for San Diego" project. The most recent of the Council's annual community-based projects, "Searching for San Diego" invites San Diegans in particular, and Californians in general, to seek an understanding of the meaning and importance of "a sense of belonging" to the place and to the community of individuals in which they live and work.

The performances, discussions, tours and other events listed on this page are free of charge. Any and all are heartily invited to attend. For additional information, call the Searching for San Diego Hotline at 619/685-5952.

LA JOLLA Neighborhood Day

Saturday April 24

THE ATHENAEUM 1008 Wall Street

10:00 a.m. La Jolla Past and Present:
A Slide Show.

10:05 a.m. "Writing Down Place: Finding
Lost America in Literature."

Why do so many Americans mourn the loss of a sense of belonging? Can America's stories—our literature—help restore our understanding of what is special about our hometowns and cities and revive our sense of community? Fred Setterberg, award-winning author of *The Roads Taken: Travels Through America's Literary Landscape*, will lead a discussion exploring these and other important questions of place.

10:55 a.m. Video Premier. *La Jolla Sketch Book: Life and Times in La Jolla from 1860 to Present*.

11:15 a.m. "Searching for Community:
What Have We Lost?
What Have We Gained?"

Panelists for this event include *San Diego Union-Tribune* columnist Tom Blair; Richard Farson, former president of the Western Behavioral Studies Institute; and *San Diego Decorating Magazine* associate editor Carol Olten.

11:55 a.m. Tour of the La Jolla "Village" by
Save Our Heritage Organization.

Co-sponsors: La Jolla Historical Society, The Athenaeum, and Save Our Heritage Organization

LINDA VISTA Neighborhood Day

Saturday May 1

LINDA VISTA LIBRARY 2160 Ulrich

10:00 a.m. Performance by Himong/Lao
Dance Group.

10:45 a.m. "From European Boat People to
Today's Southeast Asian Boat
People: Stretching the Boundaries
of Communities."

Newly arrived immigrants and longtime residents of the communities that house these newcomers share a feeling of displacement. But rather than uniting newcomers and oldtimers, this feeling often spawns conflict. How do we create "a sense of belonging" in our neighborhoods that is dynamic and inclusive rather than static and exclusive? This will be the focus of a talk by Yen Le Espiritu, an assistant professor of ethnic studies and sociology at UC San Diego who is herself originally from Vietnam.

11:30 a.m. Music from Southeast Asia.

Noon Sharing of food.

Co-sponsor: Friends of Linda Vista Library

SHERMAN HEIGHTS Neighborhood Day

Saturday May 3

SHERMAN HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AUDITORIUM 450 24th Street

10:00 a.m. Performance by Teatro ALTO.

10:30 a.m. "Selected Space: Cross-ethnic
Reclamations of Place and
(Be)longing in the Neighborhood."

How do very different individual experiences and perceptions give cultural meaning to a collective sense of belonging? Adelaida R. Del Castillo will use the oral histories and reflections of five Sherman Heights residents who differ in color, age and gender as the focus of this discussion. Del Castillo is assistant professor of Mexican American studies at San Diego State University and the editor of *Between Borders: Essays on Mexicana/Chicana History*.

11:30 a.m. Tour of Sherman Heights by Save
Our Heritage Organization.

Co-sponsored by American Festival Project, Centro Cultural de la Raza, Save Our Heritage Organization, Sherman Heights Community Center, Sherman Heights Elementary School, and Teatro ALTO.



FOR SAN DIEGO

June 4, 1993

GASLAMP QUARTER

Neighborhood Day

Saturday May 15

HORTON GRAND HOTEL

311 Island Avenue

10:00 a.m. "The Gaslamp: Whose Place? Whose Space?"

The Gaslamp, a district of many histories, many peoples, and many of the city's important events, is a place in transition. History is being recreated, a new future is being planned. What shape this transition takes and what that will mean to "a sense of belonging" is the topic of the discussion led by Leland T. Saito, assistant professor of ethnic studies and urban studies at UC San Diego.

11:00 a.m. Tour of the historic Gaslamp Quarter by Save Our Heritage Organization.

Co-sponsored by The Gaslamp Quarter Foundation, Horton Grand Hotel, National Historic Preservation Week, and Save Our Heritage Organization.



Photos by Jennifer Abramson

EMERALD HILLS

Neighborhood Day

Saturday May 22

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

1601 Kelton Road

10:00 a.m. Performance by Urban Bush Women

10:30 a.m. "House on the Hill: Fifteen Years in Emerald Hills."

Drawing on her own experiences as a community resident, UC San Diego literature professor Sherley Anne Williams will examine and discuss what has helped shape her sense of belonging to a community, and the elements and conflicts that estrange many of us from our own communities. Williams is the author of the widely acclaimed novel *Dessa Rose* and was a National Book Award nominee for her book *The Peacock Poems*.

11:30 a.m. Community Sing led by the Urban Bush Women.

Noon Picnic in Emerald Hills Park, accompanied by jazz music.

Co-sponsored by American Festival Project, Christian Fellowship Congregational Church, Emerald Hills Community Council, and Sankofa Bird Project.

PUBLIC HUMANITIES LECTURE

"The Power of Place"

N. SCOTT MOMADAY, PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING AUTHOR
Friday June 4

San Diego City College Theater
15th and C streets
8:00 p.m.

The subject of N. Scott Momaday's address will be the power of place, an idea he has frequently explored in his writing. Momaday will look at how we, as both individuals and communities, figure out where we have been and—more importantly—where we are going, significant questions as we try to learn to live together.

N. Scott Momaday's distinguished writing career includes such widely praised books as *The Way to Rainy Mountain* and the recently published *In the Presence of the Sun: Stories and Poems, 1961-1991*. The publication of his novel *House Made of Dawn*, for which he received the Pulitzer Prize (and was the first American Indian so honored), is believed by many to have sparked the American Indian cultural renaissance of the 1970s and 1980s.

Co-sponsors: San Diego Community College Honors Program, San Diego Community Foundation.

Calendar of Humanities Events

The public humanities programs listed here received funding support from the California Council for the Humanities. Please note that dates and times should be confirmed with local sponsors. These listings are often provided to the Council well before final arrangements are made.

E X H I B I T S

Through July 25 "To the Azores and Back Again: In Poetry and Painting" is an exhibit at the Merced Courthouse Museum that will present rural Azorean and California paintings and poetry. Recurring themes in the selected work deal with immigration, memory, family, and the place we choose to call home. Please call 209/385-7426 for more information.

May 15-Sept. 5 "Breaking the Mold: Freda Ehmann and the Foundation of the California Ripe Olive Industry" is an exhibit that examines the life of Freda Ehmann, an older German immigrant who broke with many social precepts of her time and created a successful business based on national and international markets. At the Community Memorial Museum of Sutter County, 1333 Butte House Road, Yuba City. 916/741-7141.

E V E N T S

April 13-May 25 "Five American Poets Who Made a Difference" is a reading-and-discussion series that meets at 7 p.m. every two weeks at the Redwood City Public Library, 1044 Middlefield Road. The meetings will focus on the lives and works of Walt Whitman, T.S. Eliot, Langston Hughes, and Sylvia Plath. For more information, please call 415/780-7061.

April 15-May 11 "Black Diaspora" is the topic of a book discussion series that features books by African and African-American authors. At the Berkeley Public Library, 2090 Kitteridge from 7:15 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. Please call 510/644-6095 for more information.

April 20 "Women, Indians, and Blacks: The Syracuse Tradition of Resistance" is a lecture/performance by Sally Roesch Wagner that will emphasize the links and ties between black abolitionist, early feminist, and Native-American resistance movements. At the Center for Women and Ethnic Issues, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. Call 805/756-2600 for more information.

May 14-16 "Looking Out/Looking Over: A Conference on Gay and Lesbian Film" will include panel discussions, film screenings and question-and-answer sessions with filmmakers. The conference will explore such issues as the status of gay and lesbian film in the film industry in general and within the larger context of minority art. At UC Davis. For information about locations and time, please call the UC Davis English Department at 916/752-2257.

May 20 "Common Good Explorations: Donald Kagan and His Critics" is a discussion in which former dean of Yale College Donald Kagan, an outspoken critic of some elements of the diversity and multicultural movements, meets with critics of his "Address to the Freshman Class of 1993." At 4:00 p.m. in San Francisco (exact location to be announced). For information, to reserve a place, or to request a copy of Professor Kagan's essay, call the World Without War Council at 510/845-1992.

May 24 "A Brief History of the American Labor Movement in Song" is an informal concert and symposium to complement material presented in *Mother Jones*, a one-woman show about the life of the famed agitator. Scholars will offer historical and labor perspectives. At the Berkeley Repertory Theatre, 2025 Addison Street. 510/204-8901.

June 12 "The Life and Works of Witold Lutoslawski" is a lecture that will precede a concert by the Oakland Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Maestro Lutoslawski. Lecture begins at 7:30 p.m.; performance at 8 p.m. At the James Moore Theatre, Oakland Museum, 1000 Oak Street, Oakland. For information, 510/533-6145.

COUNCIL LAUNCHES MOTHEREAD PROJECT IN LOS ANGELES

by Karen Mack, Motherhead Coordinator

At its June 1992 meeting, the Council decided to investigate the Motherhead program as a possible response to the violent aftermath of the Rodney King verdict in Los Angeles. In December 1992, the Council voted to develop a pilot Motherhead project, and in January 1993, hired Karen Mack to coordinate the project (see *Humanities News*). As Mack reports here, the Motherhead program has begun at three sites in Los Angeles County.

When a parent shares the magic of stories with his or her child, a powerful bond develops. They delight in each other's company. And for the child, a window onto the world is opened.

Unfortunately, forty percent of Americans never read to their children. The reasons for this staggering statistic range from illiteracy to poverty to a lack of awareness of the importance of reading to children.

Motherhead, a program created in 1987 by Nancye Gaj in North Carolina, empowers families by teaching parents how to use the storytelling skills they already possess. According to Gaj, in Motherhead, "mother" and "read" share an "r" because the program fosters both nurturing and reading. Motherhead discussion groups bring parents of young children together to share children's literature. These parents read the books to each other and relate the powerful themes to their lives and the

"My mother read to me in the big bedroom in the mornings, when we were in her rocker together, which ticked in rhythm as we rocked, as though we had a cricket accompanying the story."

Eudora Welty

lives of their children. The program's greatest success has been in helping participants change their perception of themselves from non-learners to learners, non-readers to writers, good parents to great parents.

Through a Council initiative which began in March, mothers (and fathers) in Los Angeles will have the opportunity to participate in a pilot of Motherhead at three sites: Vaughn Street Family Center in Pacoima and two sites, including Grape Street Elementary School, in the Jordan High School complex in Watts. The Council's partner in this first phase is El Nido Services, a family service agency with a long history of serving communities throughout Los Angeles County.

Four El Nido Services staff members will serve as discussion leaders for the pilot: Stacy Banks, Mary David, Aracelly Godinez and Maria Leanos.



I never knew I could be so many things and still be myself.

MOTHERHEAD student

MOTHEREAD

Banks, who has worked with parents at El Nido Services for twenty years, summed up the enthusiasm for the program when she wrote that Motherhead isn't like other models she has used with her clients. Instead, Banks envisions Motherhead "stimulating new ideas, expanding world views, facilitating self-discovery, deepening relationships with self and others, and unleashing creative energy in women."

In the second phase of the project, the Council will shift from supporting a limited number of Motherhead sites to

disseminating the program broadly through two yearly training conferences in Southern California. These sessions will be open to the staff of organizations serving families and will enable them to share Motherhead with their clients independent of the Council.

Based on Motherhead's outstanding successes in North Carolina and Minnesota, we have high hopes for the program in Los Angeles and are actively seeking partners to work with us in funding this exciting endeavor.

Humanities News

Tour Will Celebrate Jefferson’s 250th Birthday

The Council will celebrate Thomas Jefferson’s 250th birthday by sponsoring a tour of scholar-performer Clay Jenkinson as the nation’s third president. While details of the tour are not yet complete, the plan is for Jenkinson to visit Anderson, Bishop, Bridgeport, Colusa, El Centro, Grass Valley, Lakeport, Quincy, Red Bluff, Tuolumne and Willows between June and December 1993. During a two-day residency in each community, Jenkinson, a Rhodes scholar and the recipient of the Frankel Prize for excellence in public humanities, will present an evening “in-character” performance based on the writings of Jefferson and will take questions from the audience, first as Jefferson himself and then as a scholar with a modern perspective on Jefferson’s life and times. During his visit, Jenkinson will also be available for a local workshop or discussion group activity in each community.

Council Receives San Diego Project Grant

The San Diego Community Foundation has donated \$3,000 to support “Searching for San Diego,” the Council’s 1993 community-based project now underway in five neighborhoods throughout that city. “We’re pleased to have the San Diego Community Foundation supporting our community project,” said Executive Director Jim Quay upon learning of the award. “We see this grant as a double investment. It helps guarantee the ‘Searching for San Diego’ project and, at the same time, it endorses the value of the Council’s long-term presence within San Diego.”

Motheread Coordinator Joins Council Staff

The Council has hired Karen Mack as Motheread coordinator. She will represent the program in Los Angeles and work closely with the family service agencies that will become the Council’s partners in making Motheread available throughout the community. Mack previously served as a consultant to the Council during the exploratory phase of the Motheread project. A graduate of CSU Northridge with a bachelor’s degree in business administration, Mack earned an MBA from the Anderson Graduate School of Management at UCLA in 1990.

Council Member Resigns

Samuel Mark has resigned from the Council to devote himself more fully to concerns in the Los Angeles community. The Council received the resignation with regret and wishes Mark the best of luck.

Grants Awarded

At its December 1992 meeting, the Council invited eight sponsors to resubmit their proposals to the Council. Because of the schedule of proposed events, the Council indicated that two sponsors could resubmit before the April 1, 1993 grant application deadline. These two “special resubmits” have now been approved by the Executive Committee, as authorized by the full Council. The grants awarded are as follows:

Reestablishing and Extending the Idea of the Common Good: The Challenge in the Domestic and International Perspective

Sponsor: World Without War Council, Berkeley

Project Directors: Robert Pickus and David Keck

Amount of Award: \$16,075 in outright funds and \$10,750 in matching funds if \$21,500 is raised in outside gifts

This project involves more than 20 Northern California non-governmental agencies in a twenty-month process aimed at reestablishing and extending the idea of the common good in public life. Through lecture/discussions with such scholars as Michael Novak, Donald Kagan, and Gertrude Himmelfarb, seminars involving cooperating organizations, and public meetings to involve other organizations, the project will search for agreement on the common values that make shared political community possible.

Looking Out/Looking Over: A Conference on Gay and Lesbian Film

Sponsor: University of California Humanities Research Institute, Irvine

Project Director: David Van Leer

Amount of Award: \$10,000 in outright funds

This conference will examine the traditions of gay/lesbian film and lesbian/gay film theory by exploring the intersections of three interrelated topics: the intersection between lesbian and gay male cultures themselves; the status of lesbian and gay cinema in the film industry in general; and the position of gay and lesbian film within a larger context of minority art. The weekend conference begins on May 14 and will include evening screenings of films followed by discussions with filmmakers.

☐ Yes, I’d like to become a Friend of the Humanities!

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- ☐ Good Friend \$ 50
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The humanities explore what it means to be human. By becoming a friend of the California Council for the Humanities with your tax-deductible contribution, you help the exploration happen through a variety of CCH programs: exhibits, conferences, film and broadcast, Chautauqua presentations, regional coalitions, community projects, Scholars in the Schools, and much more.

The CCH needs your support, and we will match your gift with funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Please make checks payable to CCH.

Name _____

(as you wish to be acknowledged in “Humanities Network” and in our Biennial Report)

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While you’re helping the CCH, please take a minute to tell us more about your interests and activities:

- ☐ Attend public humanities events (lectures, exhibitions, etc.)
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CALIFORNIA COUNCIL FOR THE HUMANITIES

The Colifornio Council for the Humonities is a partnership of public ond acodemic life whose purpose is to invite all Colifornians to o lifelong exploration of the cultures, the stories, ond the volues thot constitute our most vital inheritance.

Since its creation in 1975, the Council hos aworded more than \$12 million to more than 1300 non-profit organizations, enobling them to produce exhibits, films ond radio programs, ond lecture series ond conferences on topics of signficonce to Colifornions.

The Council also serves Colifornions with projects of its own. These include an onnuol humonities lecture, held in a different city each year; the notional dissemination of a Scholors in the Schools program; publicotions distributed to librories, scholors ond the public; coordination ond support of local ond stotewide coalitions; on initiative on the common good; and, in 1993, a community project in San Diego, o Mothered pilot project in Los Angeles, ond o chautauquo tour commemoroting Thomas Jefferson's 250th birthday.

The Council is the stote offiliate of the Notional Endowment for the Humonities ond is supported by gronts from NEH, corporotions ond foundotions, ond by contributions from individuols. An independent, not-for-profit orgonizotion, the Council receives no stote funds.

Moior gront proposols ore occepted on April 1 ond October 1. Proposal plonning gront requests, minigrant requests, ond film-ond-speaker minigrant requests may be submitted ot ony time. Interested nonprofit orgonizations should request a free copy of the 1992-1993 Guide to the Grant Program from the San Francisco Office.

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NEXT PROPOSAL DEADLINE: October 1, 1993

Proposals must conform to the 1992-1993 Guide to Grant Programs. Send 12 copies to the San Francisco office by the due date.

HUMANITIES

Spring 1993 • Volume 15 / Number 2

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